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ABSTRACT

Previous research with adult subjects has indicated that the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) Socialization Scale (SO) is one of the most useful assessment instruments for the identification of individuals with antisocial personality disorder. In order to develop a simple measure to better identify those children at risk for future antisocial problems, 405 children in grades 2-5 were given rewritten items from the socialization scale of the CPI. These items were rewritten into yes/no format with comprehension levels suitable for 6- to 12-year-olds. In addition, teacher nominations and ratings, peer sociometric nominations of aggression and popularity, and self-report measures were collected for each child. For purposes of scale development, the sample was randomly divided into two halves, one for item analysis and one for cross-validation of findings. Data indicated that the Child Socialization Scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and concurrent validity. These findings show promise for the Child Socialization Scale as a research tool for the early identification of those children who may be most at risk, specifically for future antisocial behavior problems. (LLL)

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Assessment of Socialization in Children

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Running head: Socialization

Abstract

Previous research with adult subjects has indicated that the CPI Socialization Scale (SC) is one of the most useful assessment instruments for the identification of individuals with antisocial personality disorder, or psychopathy. To date, the best childhood predictors of adult psychopathy have been aggressive behavior and unpopular or rejected peer status. However, unpopular aggressive children are also at risk for other adult disorders such as schizophrenia. The present study represents an attempt to develop a Child Socialization Scale (Child SO) for use with elementary school children to better assess the social problems commonly associated with later psychopathy. Data from over 400 grade school children indicate that the Child Socialization Scale demonstrates acceptable internal consistency and concurrent validity, showing promise as a research tool for the early identification of those children who may be most at risk specifically for future antisocial behavior problems.

Longitudinal research has documented a clear relationship between the presence of conduct problems during childhood and the later development of antisocial personality disorder during adolescence and young adulthood (Huesman, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1983; Robins, 1978). In a longitudinal study comparing the conviction rate of men who had been seen as problematic by their parents with that of a matched group of nonproblematic controls, Mitchell & Rosa (1981) found that of the 10% of the sample rated most deviant as children, 19.6% (62/321) had been convicted of an indictable offense as an adult compared to only 9% (29/321) of the subjects rated as the least deviant children by their parents. Loeber (1982) examined several parameters of antisocial child behavior and concluded that the more extreme the delinquent behavior exhibited, the more stable it would be over time. He presented data supporting the facts that children who displayed extremely high rates of antisocial behavior early in life, who showed delinquent behavior in more than one setting, who exhibited a variety of delinquent behaviors, or who showed an early onset of delinquent behavior, relative to peers, were at a higher risk for later chronic antisocial careers.

The concept of antisocial personality disorder in adults (also known as psychopathy or sociopathy) has been described by many authors (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Brantley & Sutker, 1984; Cleckley, 1976; and Gough, 1948). Components of this disorder may

include participation in illegal activities, ratings of remorselessness and sensation-seeking, family history of psychopathy, unusual physiological responses to certain stimuli, and a lack of social sensitivity as measured by low score on the socialization scale (SO) of the California Psychological Inventory (Hare & Schalling, 1978).

According to Schalling (1978), the SO Scale is based on Gough's "sociological theory of psychopathy (which) emphasises deficiencies in role-taking ability as a result of negative early experiences in interpersonal interactions" (p. 99-100). Gough (1948) felt role-taking ability was underdeveloped in psychopaths, and all of the characteristics associated with psychopathy stemmed from this role-taking deficit. For example, the deficit leads to an inability, on the part of the psychopath, to understand how his behavior affects other people, making close relationships with others or the expression of empathy impossible. Gough (1948) also felt that deficits in self control stem from a lack of internalized standards for behavior along with an inability to anticipate the objections of others. This social insensitivity, or lack of concern for others and self, has been found to be a primary characteristic of sociopathy by a number of authors (Cleckley, 1976; Gorenstein & Newman, 1980; Rime, Bouvy, Leborgne, & Rouillon, 1978).

In several studies, the SO Scale has proven to be one of the best discriminators between psychopathic and nonpsychopathic individuals

(Hare, 1978). Low scores (indicating low socialization) on the SO Scale, or its precursor, the DE Scale, have been correlated with a number of physiological signs that are related to psychopathy (Hare, Frazzelle, & Cox, 1978; Schalling, Lidberg, Levander, & Dahlin, 1973), as well as behavioral correlates such as rule breaking and norm violations (Megargee, 1972).

While the identification of psychopathy in adults is becoming more sophisticated and reliable on a number of fronts, the development of assessment strategies for use with children who may be at risk for antisocial personality disorder has lagged far behind. Although such children are usually identified through the use of peer or teacher nominations for aggression and unpopularity (e.g., Dodge, 1980; Dodge & Frame, 1982), the resulting group of target children is still rather heterogeneous, including children at risk for other disorders such as schizophrenia and depression (Neale & Oltmanns, 1980).

Encouraged by the effectiveness of the SO Scale at identifying adult psychopaths, as well as by the findings of Dinitz and coworkers (Dinitz, Reckless, & Kay, 1958; Dinitz, Scarpitti, & Reckless, 1962) that low SO scores in sixth graders predict future delinquency, the present authors attempted to develop a simple measure to better identify those children at risk for future antisocial problems. Such a measure should initially discriminate unpopular aggressive children

from their peers, while showing moderate correlations with individual criterion measures of aggression and popularity.

Method

Subjects

The original subjects were 405 children in grades two through five of two public elementary schools in rural Georgia. There were 221 boys and 192 girls. All subjects received parental consent prior to participating in the study.

Procedure

Forty-five items from the socialization scale (SO) of the CPI were rewritten into yes/no format with comprehension levels suitable for six to twelve year olds. Typical items were "Do you give your teacher lots of trouble?" and "Do you feel sad when you stop being friends with someone?" Items were keyed for scoring in the same direction as the corresponding original CPI item. These items were then piloted on ten third graders to insure they were comprehensible by children of this age. The resulting measure named the Child Socialization (SO) Scale, was orally administered to the subjects on a class by class basis over a period of two months. In addition, teacher nominations and ratings, peer sociometric nominations of aggression and popularity, and self report measures were collected for each child.

Teacher nominations. Each teacher was asked to name three children in his or her class who best fit the description of "aggressive" and "guiltless/remorseless."

Teacher ratings. In addition, all subjects were rated by their teachers on the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1982). While the 77-item scale provides six factors relating to child behavior problems (conduct disorder, socialized aggression, attention deficit-immaturity, anxiety-withdrawal, psychotic behavior, and motor excess) only the conduct disorder and socialized aggression scale scores were used in this study.

Sociometric measures. Each subject was given a copy of the class roster and asked to select the three children in the class that he/sheliked the most. This procedure was then repeated with each subject nominating three classmates who they "liked the least," and who they felt "fought a lot," and "cooperated." An "aggressive" group was formed with all of the children above the median for fighting and liked least nominations and below the median for liked nominations. A comparison group consisted of all children with the opposite characteristics (cf. Dodge & Frame, 1982).

Self-report measures. All subjects were also administered the Children's Action Tendency Scale (CATS) (Deluty, 1979). The CATS is a 13-item self-report scale that measures aggression, assertion

and submission. All three subscale scores, measuring the aforementioned attributes, were used.

Results

For purposes of scale development, the sample was randomly divided into two halves, one for item analysis and one for cross-validation of findings. Using the first subgroup of subjects, items were retained if the percentage spread between high scorers (top 1/3) and low scores (bottom 1/3) answering the item correctly was at least 20%. In addition, all items were required to have a minimum correlation with the total score of .20. The resulting scale consisted of 24 items, which had a KR-20 of .815. Findings were replicated in the second subgroup of subjects, with a KR-20 of .80.

Total scores for each subject in subgroup 1 were then correlated with the various validation measures. Significant correlations, presented in Table 1, included self-report of aggression, peer nominations for aggression, and teacher ratings of conduct disorder. To test the relationship between Child SO scores and teacher nominations of guiltlessness and aggression, a median split was conducted on SO scores. Separate Chi-square analyses revealed a nonsignificant trend for low SO scores to be nominated more frequently for being remorseless ($\chi^2 = 3.33$, $p = .07$) and aggressive ($\chi^2 = 1.93$, $p = .17$). All significant results were replicated in subgroup 2.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that a simplified, shortened version of the CPI SO Scale may be a useful self-report instrument for identifying young children at risk for future antisocial behaviors. The psychometric properties of the scale items are acceptable, and the total scale score shows adequate concurrent validity with other measures of aggression-proneness and unpopularity. That these results were cross-validated in the second half of the sample lends further credence to the scale as a promising measure under development.

Obviously, further psychometric assessments must be completed, such as test-retest reliability, Child SO-Adult SO correlations, and predictive validity, before the Child SO can be considered as a useable scale. These procedures are currently underway. If the scale survives continued scrutiny, it may be very valuable in discriminating young children who are at risk for antisocial careers from those at risk for other disorders, permitting the development and application of more specific clinical interventions.

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Table 1

Correlation of Total Child SO Score with Criterion Variables

	Correlation with Total Child SO Score
Self report aggression	-.528****
Self report assertion	-.507****
Self report submission	.382****
Peer nominations for fights	-.303****
Peer nominations for cooperates	.299****
Peer nominations for liked least	-.253***
Peer nominations for liked most	.161*
Teacher rating conduct disordered	-.291**

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

****$p < .0001$